Approved for Release: 2020/08/17 C05349895

Central Intelligence Agency

Washington, D.C. 20505

file

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

2 March 1984

EL SALVADOR: D'AUBUISSON'S TERRORIST ACTIVITIES

Introduction

D'Aubuisson's involvement in rightwing terrorist activities has been alleged in a variety of open [redacted] *sources since the late 1970s. Some reports have had the characteristic of unsubstantiated rumor or allegation,* [redacted] *Little corroboration on specific activities attributable to D'Aubuisson has been available. Over the past year, however, several reports* [redacted] *have alleged D'Aubuisson's complicity with terrorist elements in the military and the civilian ARENA party.* [redacted] *moreover, have added credibility to* [redacted] *on D'Aubuisson's involvement in the assassination of Archbishop Romero.*

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This memorandum was requested by Vice-President Bush. It was prepared by [redacted] *ALA, and was coordinated with the National Intelligence Officer and the Directorate of Operations. It contains information available as of 2 March 1984. Questions and comments are welcome and should be addressed to Chief, Middle America-Caribbean Division, ALA,* [redacted]

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D'Aubuisson's Military Contacts

Before leaving the armed forces in the wake of the October 1979 military coup, Major D'Aubuisson had served much of his career as an intelligence officer with the National Guard. He and several colleagues--graduates from the academy classes of 1963, 1964, and 1966--worked directly under or in cooperation with National Guard Director Medrano, a notorious and powerful figure in military and rightwing civilian circles. Medrano had his proteges focus on counterintelligence and rural security; during the 1960s and 1970s, D'Aubuisson and his colleagues helped develop civilian intelligence networks and vigilante organizations controlled by the National Guard. They also reportedly engaged in illegal detentions, torture, and the killing of prisoners--habits which reporting suggests stayed with some of them after the 1979 reformist coup.

Some of D'Aubuisson's most notorious past associates in the military were Lieutenant Colonels Staben, Zacapa, Zepeda, Cruz, Ochoa, Ponce, and Moran. These and other middle-grade officers were in turn the mentors of a new generation of junior officers [redacted] to have been involved in death squad and other illegal activities. The murder of two US labor advisors at the Sheraton Hotel in San Salvador in January 1981, for example, was authorized by two young officers known for their criminal activities and close association with D'Aubuisson and other extremist officers. (b)(1) (b)(3)

D'Aubuisson's Political Organization

In May 1980, D'Aubuisson was jailed and then exiled for coup plotting. He left for Guatemala and formed the Broad National Front (FAN), a semi-clandestine political organization bent on overthrowing the reformist regime in San Salvador. Reporting indicates that FAN received significant funding from wealthy Salvadoran exiles living abroad, and some sources have suggested FAN links with US politicians and businessmen. The FAN used black market contacts to arm a small para-military organization in El Salvador that included both civilians and military personnel, some of whom probably belonged to existing death squads loyal to D'Aubuisson.

By the fall of 1981, D'Aubuisson had reorganized the FAN into a bonafide political party known as the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA). He convinced businessmen and other professionals to join the party and support candidates in the

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March 1982 Constituent Assembly elections. During this period, rightwing gunmen reported to be allied with ARENA killed several Christian Democratic party members, civil servants, and labor figures.

ARENA has become the second largest political party in El Salvador and probably is the best funded and organized going into this month's presidential election. Within the party, however, D'Aubuisson is [redacted] to maintain a team that engages in political intimidation, including abduction, torture, and murder. Until the beginning of this year, the head of this team [redacted] was Dr. Hector Regalado, the chief of security for the Assembly. He and several subordinates belonging to ARENA reportedly utilized members of the Secret Anti-Communist Army and the Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez Brigade--two death squads founded several years ago by D'Aubuisson--to carry out murder and sabotage against ARENA's real or perceived enemies. Reports show that Regalado's group was considering targeting US Embassy officials in response to press stories about rightwing terrorism. Following the visit of Vice President Bush and the resignation of D'Aubuisson from the Assembly to run for president, Regalado and two associates also left their public posts. (b)(1) (b)(3) (b)(1) (b)(3)

Since that time, there has been no information on the status of the ARENA-sponsored terrorist groups. Killings in January and February of this year thought to be the work of rightwing extremists cannot be pinned specifically to D'Aubuisson or to any of several other death squads--military or civilian--known to exist.

Assassination of Archbishop Romero

A variety of sources have accused D'Aubuisson of complicity in the murder of Romero in March 1980. Although [redacted] [redacted] is credible, there is nothing that could be construed as hard proof. (b)(1) (b)(3)

While any of a number of rightwing death squads could have planned and carried out what was a relatively simple execution in a neighborhood chapel in San Salvador, there probably were few so fanatical and daring as D'Aubuisson to do it. Several [redacted] the Romero assassination claim that D'Aubuisson and his colleagues held meetings in early 1980 to plan the killing. [redacted] those in attendance were asked to draw lots to determine who would carry out the act. [redacted] (b)(1) (b)(3) (b)(1) (b)(3) (b)(3)

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indicate that military personnel comprised the hit squad and that a former National Guard enlisted man fired the fatal shot. [redacted] [redacted] differ as to the logistics of the killing. (b)(1) (b)(3)

NOTE: [redacted] have been at variance in interpreting the death squad issue. [redacted] launched an effort to assure that [redacted] are working from the same data base. Collection requirements are also being drafted in preparation for an intelligence community assessment of the death squads. (b)(1) (b)(3) (b)(1) (b)(3)

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